

4. Why am I suffering?

Every human being suffers in this material world. No one can claim that he is not suffering. That is not possible. In this material world, there are three kinds of suffering: *adhyatmika*, *adhibhautika*, and *adhidaivika*. These are miseries arising from the material body and mind, from other living entities, and from the forces of nature. We may suffer mental anguish, or we may suffer from other living entities--from ants or mosquitoes or flies--or we may suffer due to some superior power. There may be no rain, or there may be flood. There may be excessive heat or excessive cold. So many types of suffering are imposed by nature. Thus there are three types of miseries within the material world, and everyone is suffering from one, two, or three of them. No one can say that he is completely free from suffering.

What is the problem of our lives? That we do not know. Modern education never gives enlightenment about the real problem of life. That is indicated in the Bhagavad-Gita. Those who are educated and are advancing in knowledge should know what is the problem of life. This problem is stated in the Gita: one should always see the inconveniences of birth, death, old age, and disease. Unfortunately no one pays attention to these problems. When a man is diseased he thinks, "All right. Let me go to the doctor. He will give me some medicine, and I will be cured." But he does not consider the problem very seriously. "I did not want this disease. Why is there disease? Is it not possible to become free from disease?" He never thinks that way. This is because his intelligence is very low-grade, just like that of an animal. An animal suffers, but it has no sense. If an animal is brought to a slaughterhouse and sees that the animal before him is being slaughtered, he will still stand there contentedly eating the grass. This is animal life. He does not know that next time it will be his turn and he will be slaughtered. I have seen it. In a Kali temple I have seen that a goat was standing there ready to be sacrificed and another goat was very happily eating the grass. Similarly, Maharaja Yudhisthira was asked by Yamaraja, "What is the most wonderful thing in this world? Can you explain?" So Maharaja Yudhisthira answered, "Yes. The most wonderful thing is that at every moment one can see that his friends, his fathers, and his relatives have died, but he is thinking, 'I shall live forever.'" He never thinks that he will die, just as an animal never thinks that at the next moment he may be slaughtered. He is satisfied with the grass, that's all. He is satisfied with the sense gratification. He does not know that he is also going to die.

My father has died, my mother has died, he has died, she has died. So I will also have to die. Then what is after death? I do not know. This is the problem. People do not take this problem seriously, but the Bhagavad-Gita indicates that that is real education. Real education is to inquire why, although we do not want to die, death comes. That is real inquiry. We do not want to become old men. Why does old age come upon us? We have many problems, but this is the sum and substance of all of them.

The sages of India had developed a different kind of civilization, which enabled them to know themselves. They had discovered that we are not at all material entities, but that we are all spiritual, permanent, and indestructible servants of the Absolute. But because we have, against our better judgment, chosen to completely identify ourselves with this present material existence, our sufferings have multiplied according to the inexorable law of birth and death, with its consequent diseases and anxieties. These sufferings cannot be really mitigated by any provision of material happiness, because matter and spirit are completely different elements. It is just as if you took an aquatic animal out of water and put it on the land, supplying all manner of happiness possible on land. The deadly sufferings of the animal are not capable of being relieved at all until it is taken out of its foreign environment. Spirit and matter are completely contradictory things. All of us are spiritual entities. We cannot have perfect happiness, which is our birthright, however much we may meddle with the affairs of mundane things. Perfect happiness can be ours only when we are restored to our natural state of spiritual existence. This is the distinctive message of our ancient Indian civilization, this is the message of the Gita, this is the message of the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*, and this is the message of all the real acaryas, including our present Acaryadeva, in the line of Lord Caitanya.

(Adapted from Science of Self realisation – Chapters 2 & 5.)

Discovery

1. Mention the 3 kinds of suffering
2. What is the real problem of our lives?

Understanding

1. Why is it that though we see many people suffering and we ourselves are suffering we are not looking out for a solution to end these sufferings?
2. How is the analogy of aquatic animal out of water applicable to us?

Application:

1. Do you have any experience or realization that when you engage in devotional service even for a moment you forget about yourself and your surroundings? Do you wish this feeling would go on eternally? Please share
2. How many times have you felt helpless in a situation and therefore got frustrated? Do you think you should have acted differently why/ why not?

SRI NAMAMRTA

By performance of saṅkīrtana-yajña, the congregational chanting of the holy name, people will be happy economically, politically, socially, religiously and culturally:

In the present age of Kali there will eventually be a great scarcity of water (anāvṛṣṭi), for the general populace, due to ignorance and the scarcity of yajña ingredients, will neglect to perform yajñas. Srimad-Bhāgavatam therefore advises: *yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prayaiḥ yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ*. After all, yajña is meant to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In this age of Kali, there is great scarcity and ignorance; nonetheless, everyone can perform saṅkīrtana-yajña. Every family in every society can conduct saṅkīrtana-yajña at least every evening. In this way there will be no disturbance or scarcity of rain. It is essential for the people in this age to perform the saṅkīrtana-yajña in order to be materially happy and to advance spiritually.

(SB 5.4.3)

PREACHING IS THE ESSENCE

The devotees who, out of compassion, preach are as confidential to the Lord as Lord Brahmā:

A pure devotee of the Lord like Brahmā and persons in his disciplic succession are always unhappy to see the perplexities of the conditioned souls, who are suffering the onslaughts of the threefold miseries which pertain to the body and mind, to the disturbances of material nature and many other such material disadvantages.... The devotees of the Lord who voluntarily take the responsibility of raising the foolish materialistic sense enjoyers are as confidential to the Lord as Lord Brahmā.

(SB 3.9.8)